

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH

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CREATING A FOURTH CHILD WELFARE OUTCOME GOAL - "SELF-SUFFICIENCY"

Since 2003, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has focused on strategically improving outcomes for the children and families it serves. In order to accomplish these improvements, DCFS identified three outcome goals, which are improved safety; improved permanency; and a reduced reliance on out-of-home care. In order to achieve the desired outcomes, DCFS implemented a number of successful strategies, which included:

- Re-alignment of existing departmental revenues and expenditures with the desired outcomes;
- Significant service delivery reforms;
- Outcomes-based contracting; and
- Improved working relationships with other County Departments and child welfare stakeholders.

To date, these wide-sweeping reforms have realized improved child safety; an 18% reduction in caseloads; a 32% improvement in timelines to permanency; and a 36% reduction in children living in out-of-home care.

Despite all of the above, the annual reality remains that between 1,200 and 1,500 youth age-out of County supervision at age 18, following years in out-of-home care without safe reunification or alternative permanency. The plight of these youth is dire, and unfortunately, their specific needs cannot be consistently and comprehensively met through the existing three outcome goals. National statistics reveal that many of these youth age-out with low educational attainment; imminent housing needs; substantially less income-earning ability; and often no transition to the adult systems of care needed to support their special needs. For these youth, we need to create a fourth child welfare outcome goal, which is ***self-sufficiency***.

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Over the past decade, many state legislative efforts aimed at improving the lives of aging-out foster youth failed due to costs. Fortunately, several other successful state and federal legislative advancements include:

- The 1999 **Chafee Foster Care Independence Act**,
- The 2004 Assembly Bill 490: **Ensuring Educational Rights for Foster Youth**;
- The 2006 Assembly Bill 2985: **Protecting Foster Youth Identity Theft**, and
- The 2008 HR 6893: **Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act**.

In October 2008, President George W. Bush signed HR 6893 into law. HR 6893 is landmark federal legislation with mandatory requirements for states, one of which is an age extension for voluntary foster care services to youth between the ages of 18 and 21. Accordingly, in December 2008, Assembly Speaker Karen Bass and Assemblyman Jim Beall introduced Assembly Bill 12 to ensure that California opted into the mandatory requirements of HR 6893. In January 2010, AB 12 passed out of the Assembly and is now awaiting hearing by the State Senate Committees on Human Services and Judiciary. As currently drafted, the implementation of the mandatory provisions of AB 12 will be phased-in between January 1, 2012 to January 1, 2014.

Our youth cannot wait. We have to work smarter by adding a measurable fourth child welfare outcome goal of "self-sufficiency;" and achieving better self-sufficiency outcomes for youth by re-aligning departmental revenues and expenditures; concurrently planning youth development services; contracting outcomes-based self-sufficiency services; and improving working relationships with other County departments and child welfare stakeholders. No effort should be spared to ensure the future success of each and every one our youths as productive members of society.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Officer, in conjunction with the Departments of Children and Family Services, Probation, Public Social Services, Community and Senior Services, Mental Health, the Community Development Commission and other affected departments, to report back in 30 days and quarterly thereafter on establishing the **fourth child welfare outcome goal of "self-sufficiency;"** and the feasibility of:

- (1) Realigning **existing** departmental revenues and expenditures to support new strategies to improve "self-sufficiency" for youth, to include, but not be limited to, housing, education, employment and well-being;
- (2) Centralizing **concurrent youth development planning services**;
- (3) Integrating "youth-centered" self-sufficiency services across various County Departments in order to create seamless service delivery; and establishing youth self-sufficiency MAPP goals for the responsible departmental managers within those various County Departments; and
- (4) Creating an evaluation mechanism to establish baseline data and, thereafter, annually measure improvements in the child welfare outcome goal of self-sufficiency.

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